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Morris signs on to new mission

Our view: We applaud the mayor's show of compassion for city's most disadvantaged.

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Christmas may be over, but the need to give isn't, nor are the problems facing the homeless. San Bernardino Mayor Pat Morris' pledge to rank homelessness and abject poverty among his key concerns in the new year is encouraging, especially since the homeless population is so visible in the city. Yet San Bernardino is abysmally short on homeless shelters.

A holiday presentation last week by Rolling Start emphasized the plight of some of the city's least fortunate. Not only does the city have too few homeless shelters, but none of them is adequately equipped to accommodate the disabled.

The city's only homeless shelter available to men in the winter, Central City Lutheran Mission, has had about 150 different people sleeping there this month, many with various disabilities, said the Rev. David Kalke. "The fact that disabled people come here for shelter at all is an indication of the depth of the problem," Kalke said.

It's a sad state of affairs, and it exists countywide. A 2003 report by the Community Action Partnership found that as many as 23,549 people in San Bernardino County are living on the streets in any given year.

It's an issue communities must take seriously.

"The way we serve the most vulnerable among us is the true test of our strength as leaders in the community," said Morris. Having worked aggressively to fight crime and blight in the city, Morris now plans to add homelessness to his agenda.

But homelessness isn't confined to just one city. Morris said he plans to attack the problem collaboratively, on a regionwide basis. We urge civic leaders in other cities to climb on board in 2007.